

CLAIMS AMENDMENTS:

Please cancel claims 23, 24, 25 and 26 without prejudice.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claim 1 (canceled)

Claim 2 (canceled)

Claim 3 (canceled)

Claim 4 (canceled)

Claim 5 (canceled)

Claim 6 (canceled)

Claim 7 (canceled)

Claim 8 (canceled)

Claim 9 (canceled)

Claim 10 (canceled)

Claim 11 (canceled)

Claim 12 (canceled)

Claim 13 (canceled)

Claim 14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (canceled)

Claim 16 (canceled)

Claim 17 (canceled)

Claim 18 (canceled)

Claim 19 (canceled)

Claim 20 (canceled)

21. (Currently amended) A screening method for identifying agent compounds capable of increasing 27-hydroxy-7-dehydrocholesterol (cholesta-5,7-diene-3 $\beta$ -27 diol) and/or 27-hydroxy-8-dehydrocholesterol (cholesta-5,8-diene-3 $\beta$ -27 diol) levels in a cell or an animal, wherein said compound interferes with the expression of 27-hydroxy-7-dehydrocholesterol reductase activity ~~or stimulates expression of 27-hydroxylase activity~~, comprising determining the levels of 27-hydroxy-7-dehydrocholesterol and/or 27-hydroxy-8-dehydrocholesterol in the presence and absence of a compound, and selecting wherein a compound which stimulates 27-hydroxylase or reduces 27-hydroxy-7-dehydrocholesterol reductase relative to a control is identified as a compound capable of increasing increases 27-hydroxy-7-dehydrocholesterol and/or 27-hydroxy-8-dehydrocholesterol relative to the levels in the absence of the compound.

22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 21, wherein a compound is selected that ~~interferes with the expression of 27-hydroxy-7-dehydrocholesterol reductase activity is identified~~ as a compound capable of increasing 27-hydroxy-7-dehydrocholesterol and/or 27-hydroxy-8-dehydrocholesterol levels relative to the levels in the absence of the compound and wherein the expression of 27-hydroxylase, as determined by measuring its encoding mRNA CYP27, is not altered in the presence of the compound.

Claim 23 (Canceled)

Claim 24 (Canceled)

Claim 25 (Canceled)

Claim 26 (Canceled)